

CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I thank you. And it's indeed an honor to be here tonight to talk with my colleagues about something that's going on in the world today that is of huge import. And no, I'm not talking about who was the victor in the NCAA Final Four Basketball Tournament.

I'm not here to talk to my colleagues about who might be the winner this year of the American Idol contest, as we get closer and closer and that draws the interest of so many of television viewers throughout the country.

What I'm talking about tonight, Madam Speaker, is probably the most important thing that this country has on its plate in a long, long time, and that is the situation in the Middle East and what's going on in Iraq and Afghanistan and how important that conflict is, not just to this country and its citizens, but the region in the Middle East and, indeed, the entire world, Madam Speaker, as we continue to wage, as we have for the last 5½ years, this battle, this war against global terrorism. And ground zero, Madam Speaker, make no mistake about it, ground zero is in Iraq.

Today our commander there, of the multinational force Iraq, General David Petraeus, and the United States Ambassador, Ambassador to Iraq, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, are here in Washington, D.C. to testify before both the United States Senate and in this chamber, the United States House of Representatives, to the Armed Services Committee of both the House and the Senate, and to the Foreign Affairs Committee of both bodies. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker spoke to the Senate today in a full, long day of testimony, and they will be speaking tomorrow to the House committees that I just mentioned.

Madam Speaker, along with yourself and many other very fortunate Members of this House of Representatives, I do serve on the Armed Services Committee, and I certainly look forward to hearing from these two great men who have served so well and for so long in a difficult part of the world, and also to have the opportunity to ask some questions, and I'm sure some of them will be tough questions, hard questions for Members of both political bodies, both the majority and the minority.

So, as I say, this opportunity tonight, on behalf of my party, the Republican minority, to take this hour and talk about this and try to explain to my colleagues that this is really, we are at a critical point in this war in the Middle East. And we have an opportunity, as I've felt for a long time, as I felt last September when General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker first came before the committees and ex-

plained that the surge that we enacted in January of 2007 is, indeed, working. And what they said last September is that we need to give it a chance.

Indeed, if you made an analogy to a sporting event, you might say that we're in the fourth quarter of a tough game, and at times, indeed, January of 2007 and several months before that, it did appear that we were losing. Members of this body and the other body in leadership positions made some pretty drastic statements, even to the extent of saying the war's lost, it's hopeless, it's a hopeless situation; we need to just pack up and come home.

But General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, last September told us, no, that is not the case because we did change courses. We listened to the recommendations of the Iraqi Study Group, co-chaired by a very prominent Democrat and Republican, and we listened very carefully to their recommendations in regard to what needed to be done. And this surge of about 30,000 additional troops has certainly given us the opportunity to regain control and get the upper hand against these Islamic extremists and thugs that could, and would, and are determined not only to destroy Iraq, but to make that country the base of their support. And, yes, of course I'm talking about al Qaeda.

Anyone who thinks, Madam Speaker, that Iraq is not ground zero now for al Qaeda simply is ignoring the words of Osama bin Laden.

So we are, as General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker said, we are at a very critical point. And today, the evidence will show, and during this next 45 to 60 minutes of time that me and some of my colleagues on our side of the aisle will have to discuss this, we are going to present the evidence that we are succeeding. We have not won yet, but we're ahead in the fourth quarter, and this is certainly not the time to pull our team off the field and say, well, you know, they're tired, they're stressed; the ranks are thin. It's cost us too much money. And hey, you know, we may have some conflict break out somewhere else in the world, and we have to be ready for that. Maybe 6 months from now, maybe a year from now, maybe 10 years from now.

So this approach, strategy of giving up something that we have almost won, after sacrificing 4,000 killed in action, and closer to 20,000 of our brave men and women severely wounded, and an untold number, maybe as many as 100,000 Iraqi civilians who have also given their lives for the cause, it makes no sense to this Member, Madam Speaker, that you would give up at such a critical, crucial time.

So what we're going to talk about tonight is really four things. I want to concentrate on four things. And as I say, hopefully, a number of my colleagues will be able to finish up their previous engagements and be here with me on the floor, because these Members are members of the Armed Serv-

ices Committee and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States House of Representatives. And they, Madam Speaker, know of what they speak.

And what we're going to do is break it down, as I say, into four areas of discussion. The first area would be to talk about where are we today? What difference has a year made? Actually, it's a little more than a year. January of 2007. But it took until October, just this past fall, to get all of the additional troops and their support, logistical support into the theater. And you really couldn't expect a lot of change in the battle until we got the full force of those 30,000 additional troops. And you, ladies and gentlemen, my colleagues, we all refer to that as the surge. And this was what was recommended by General Petraeus.

And so we're going to talk about it, what a difference a year makes, and talk about some of the statistics about overall violence and progress. And the statistics don't lie. You can't put spin on numbers. Numbers are what they are. And I think the numbers, when we finish this special order hour, Madam Speaker, I think my colleagues will agree that by any standard, any parameter, any metric that I talk about, you'd have to say that the surge that was essentially envisioned, planned by General Petraeus, is, indeed, working, maybe even far better than he expected.

And the second thing that I'll talk about is, what would victory look like? You know, we're on track. We're not there yet. I think it would be presumptuous, maybe even naive of me to say that we have victory in our grasp, or to suggest that the mission is over, we won. No, we're not there yet.

And I think the violence that broke out recently in Basra, the second largest city in Iraq, after Baghdad, the port city where every drop of oil that's taken out of the ground, those 2½ to 3 million barrels a day from the reserves in the country of Iraq, they flow out of that port at Basra. And there's been a lot of violence there. And, you know, that's some disappointing news after we have had a string of several months of good news and great statistics.

But we know from that little wake-up call that there's still a lot of work to be done. Unfortunately, as has been the case in so many conflicts throughout the course of the history of our country, we have had to take the lead so many times. And we have had strong allies, certainly, the Brits have been a great ally of ours throughout history, and continue to be. But the fact is that they're citizens are, they're not as supportive, maybe, from time to time, as we would like for them to be.

□ 2100

And it's very difficult for their parliament to keep troops as part of our multinational force. There are some in Basra, but something like a thousand British troops were removed from that

critical area, which they have had responsibility for since day one of Operation Iraqi Freedom. A lot of those troops were brought home for political reasons in September of 2007, and it weakened our situation in Basra. We are paying the price today, I think, because of that, but we will talk about these statistics, and we will certainly talk about what victory would look like.

The third point that I am going to ask my colleagues to discuss, and I will discuss as well, is the fact that despite these overwhelming statistics and the progress that we've made, there are Members in this body, in this town, the media, voices, that say and continue to say, it is not worth it. It is not worth it. It is not worth the lives that we have sacrificed. It is not worth the money that we've spent. Even achieving victory is not worth it. We need to bring the troops home and spend that money on social welfare programs, on health care for everybody, and maybe a \$5,000 tax rebate for every man, woman, and child in the country. There are other things that we could do to spend that \$10 billion a month that this war is costing us. Now, I want to talk about that, and we will get into it.

And then lastly, and maybe most important tonight, we will talk about the consequences of failure, the consequences of withdrawal, which I am absolutely convinced, if done prematurely, will lead, inevitably, to failure.

So we will conclude by talking about the consequences of that. And I think, as my colleagues listen, it will be quite sobering to them as they think in their mind and understand, and this is an intelligent body of 435 great Americans, of people who have served this country well and representing their districts well, but sometimes we need a wake-up call. Sometimes we really, Mr. Speaker, need a wake-up call. And that's why we do these Special Orders on both sides of the aisle.

But tonight, I don't think there really is anything more important to talk about than the situation in the Middle East, and I'm proud to have this opportunity, and it's a great honor and a privilege.

I see my colleague from Tennessee, one of my classmates who joined with me in the 110th Congress. We were both elected in 2002. We both had served, me in the State of Georgia, she in the State of Tennessee, in the General Assembly; and we are part of a proud group of, I think there were 53 freshmen back in 2003 as we got here. And we all, I'm sure, felt like we had the answers to all problems and that we were going to solve all of the country's problems and the world's problems. And I can tell you that we haven't, but we haven't given up, and we will continue to work hard.

So it's an honor to be joined now by the gentlewoman from Tennessee, my good friend and outstanding Member, MARSHA BLACKBURN.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman from Georgia, and Mr. Speaker, he just touched on something I think is so very important.

Every once in a while, we need a wake-up call, and I think that is indeed true. And today has been a very serious day. This week is a very serious week here on Capitol Hill. And as I entered the Capitol again this evening to participate in our Special Order hour, I was struck by this stillness of the surroundings, the serene feelings of the Capitol as you walk in and as you look at the paintings and at the statues, making my way over to the chamber, reminded of those who have loved this Nation and loved the freedoms that we all enjoy and that allow us to stand in this chamber and participate in debate and to bring forward ideas and talk about what is a good idea and what is a bad idea.

And indeed, as the gentleman from Georgia said, every once in a while we need a wake-up call and a reminder that freedom is an idea that definitely has served this Nation well. It, Mr. Speaker, is an idea that serves all of the nations of the world very well. It is something that people all over the globe seek to have.

We have had discussion on this floor tonight about Tibet and the desire there to live in freedom, to worship freely. Many of us have watched the Iraqi people move forward with elections freely and willingly. Some of us travel to other nations to participate as we watch people seek to go in large numbers to the ballot box in their nation to freely vote.

I was struck a little bit earlier today, and I think it was more or less a wake-up call for me, Mr. Speaker. I stood in the shadow of the Capitol on the Senate side with a group called Vets for Freedom. I have had the opportunity to spend some time with them as they have told their stories about the success, the success stories, if you will, of what is happening on the ground in Iraq. And today they were joined by Senator MCCAIN, Senator LIEBERMAN, and other Members of the Senate, several of us from the House, including one of our most distinguished Members and a former prisoner of war, SAM JOHNSON, the honorable gentlemen from the great State of Texas.

And it was amazing to stand there and look into the faces of these veterans who have been willing to put it all on the line for freedom, to put it all on the line to protect this great Nation. And then to give actions to, again, to the actions they've carried out, to the words and the stories they're telling, and again, to take an action of coming here and coming to the Capitol and meeting with the Members of this body and to stand and support General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker as they reported to our Nation, to say we've been there, we've carried out the heavy lift, and indeed, freedom is worth the fight.

They've also made it very clear that America now has the opportunity to

achieve our fundamental objectives in Iraq through the establishment of a peaceful, stable, secular, democratic State which will be a reliable ally in the struggle against both Sunni and Shiite terrorism. Establishing this ally would allow America to reorient our position in the Middle East away from a position that relies on anti-democratic States to a position based on a strong democratic partner whose citizens have explicitly rejected al Qaeda and terrorism in general and have chosen freedom.

Today, General Petraeus reported to the Senate on his progress. Tomorrow, the House will hear from the general.

What we've learned so far is that levels of violence and civilian deaths have been reduced substantially. Al Qaeda Iraq, and other extremist elements, have been dealt serious and damaging blows. The capabilities of the Iraqi security forces have grown. Indeed, the involvement of local Iraqis and local security has been noteworthy. The forces are growing, and indeed, the Iraqis have carried out their own surge, Mr. Speaker.

Americans are well aware the additional U.S. forces that deployed to Iraq as part of the surge and our great Nation's part there. What is less understood well is that Iraqi forces surged, adding over 100,000 additional soldiers and police to their very own security forces in 2007.

There has been a shift in attitude among certain elements of the Iraqi population. The Sunni communities in Iraq increasingly have rejected al Qaeda's indiscriminate violence and extremist ideology. They recognize that they cannot share in the new Iraq if they don't participate in the political arena. That, Mr. Speaker, is a major step forward.

Over time, these awakenings have prompted tens of thousands of Iraqis, some former insurgents, to contribute to local security as sons of Iraq. There are 91,000 sons of Iraq Shia, as well as Sunni, under contract to help coalition and Iraqi forces protect their own neighborhoods. Again, they are taking the lead.

Al Qaeda's leadership, who still see Iraq as the central front in a global strategy, send funding, instructions, and foreign fighters to Iraq. Iraq's ethno-sectarian conflict in many areas is taking place through debate rather than through violence. That is another turn that we have seen. Security incidents are at a level not seen since early 2005, and civilian deaths have decreased to a level not seen before the mosque bombings in 2006.

Mr. Speaker, these are all items that are being reported to us of successes, military successes, that are taking place; and indeed, the gentleman from Georgia has mentioned some of these, has touched on some of the trends that we are seeing; and I know he's going to spend a little bit of time this evening going back and looking at these steps that tell the story of what is happening on the ground.

And as we see this take place, we see a population that is, indeed, beginning to feel safe to leave their homes. And once you're safe to leave your home, then you can start to work to make certain that your neighborhood is safe and then you make certain that your province is safe. All of this leads to a safer and free Iraq.

We know that the Iraqi parliament is making some progress, and as the gentleman from Georgia detailed some of the stats tonight, these are going to be items that will be included as we look.

Mr. GINGREY. The gentlewoman remembers, I think we all remember, hopefully, that last year the Congress asked for the Iraqi government to meet certain benchmarks. And this is exactly what Representative BLACKBURN is talking about now in regard to certain laws that their parliament would need to pass. It was sort of like a, you know, we'll only continue to help you if you promise by a date certain that you will have provincial elections, that you will pass a de-Ba'athification law, which essentially meant that those Sunnis, those brave soldiers that we are calling now and referring to as sons of Iraq, and as I say, mostly Sunnis, that they would have an opportunity to be included, maybe to be officially a part of the Iraqi security force.

So the government had to get over the fact that there was this rivalry, if you will, between the Shias in the majority and the Sunnis in the minority and the Sunnis led by the brutal dictator. Saddam Hussein had suppressed, oppressed, murdered so many of the Shias for so many years of his reign of terror that it's difficult to all of a sudden reach out an olive branch, but that's what we asked them to do in regard to de-Ba'athification, and I think it's important. And also asking them to share the oil revenue with all parts of the country, not just where the oil is found in the oil-rich Kurdish region but also in the west where there's very little oil and in the south as you have sharing.

□ 2115

So that's what the gentlewoman is talking about, and I yield back to her.

I just wanted to say that, and I'll make this one last point before I yield back, if the gentlewoman will bear with me just a second. It was said that those benchmarks needed to be met before we would provide additional troops and security and help stabilize things on the ground. But you couldn't have an effective parliament, an effective government until the people on the ground, in the towns, in the villages felt that their new government that they voted for could protect them, that had the ability, had the military strength, had the training that they felt secure and that they could go forward with this government. So the provision of security on the ground was first and foremost, and that's what the surge was all about.

I yield back to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding. And he's exactly right. Security on the ground, a secure and stable environment. And that is what the counterinsurgency strategy has been about, and the results that it has yielded.

As we have just discussed, indeed, and as Americans know well, we had a surge from our troops. The Iraqis also carried out their surge, and what it has yielded is an environment where not only we saw the military progress, but also where political progress can take place. And there are some wonderful lessons learned here.

I think that one of those, when we are in Iraq visiting with our troops and working with some of the Iraqis and helping to mentor some of the women that we have mentored over there, one of the things they will tell you is, we are so glad that you have not left us. Thank you for not leaving us. We know people are frustrated. We know there are no guarantees. But we also know that it is important that we keep at it. It's not going to happen overnight. And thank you, thank you for not leaving. We fear what would happen if you left.

And they are, as the gentleman from Georgia was saying, Mr. Speaker, they are seeing progress. The Iraq parliament is seeing progress. And as the gentleman just listed some things, and let me touch on them again, a pension law for regime officials, that has happened. De-Ba'athification reform, that has been carried out. An amnesty law, provincial election laws. And as he said, the sharing, the national government now sharing oil revenues with the provinces, something that a year ago many people said, it will never happen. But, here we are, and yes, indeed, it all is beginning to take place.

I yield back to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, again, I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee. And I would like to reemphasize the statistics that she was talking about that we said at the outset, Mr. Speaker, of this hour that we're going to talk about what a difference that a year makes and present those statistics, how particularly violence has decreased. And Representative BLACKBURN has already talked about that.

But I would ask my colleagues to reference this first slide in regard to its title. This is a little difficult to see in the back of the Chamber, but "Civilian Deaths." And it is amazing, if you look at this top line going back to January of 2006 and then coming forward almost to present day, March of 2008, and you see that about the time of the surge, that peaked the civilian deaths. We're talking about on an almost monthly basis, 4,000 civilian deaths. I think if you follow the line down, that would be about January or February of 2007. And in March of 2008, at the far side of the chart, you're looking at a number just slightly over 600. So to go from almost 4,000 deaths to 600. And I have some additional charts to basically show the

same thing, again, the statistics that we promised to present at the outset of the hour, to show you what a difference a year makes.

And this slide, my colleagues, says "High Profile Attacks," basically explosions. And the blue line is the total. The next, I guess you would call that the brown graph, is car bombs. The red is suicide car bombs. And then on the bottom is suicide deaths. But this is a total. And that's where the rubber meets the road in these statistics.

And again, about a year ago, you were talking about attacks occurring in the range of 125 a day. And until this recent outbreak in Basra, they were down to about 40 a day. So, again, as I said at the outset, by any measure, by any parameter, any metric you want to take, the success of the surge is obvious.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. If the gentleman will yield.

Mr. GINGREY. I will be glad to yield. I will make one further point, and then I will yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

These success stories you don't see on the nightly news. I think it was Ann Murray that sang a very famous hit a number of years ago, and I think the title of that was "A Little Good News Today." You don't hear about good news because, by definition, it's not news. It's only mayhem and violence and killings and rapes and people putting their children in the trunk of a car and leaving them there for a day as a disciplinary action for some minor infraction. These are the kind of things that are on the front pages of our newspapers and on the 24-hour news service. They only talk about it when there's violence. Unfortunately, there's not much credit given to a little good news, in fact, a lot of good news.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

And he has shown us some great charts, civilian deaths, the coalition data, the high profile attacks with the suicide car bombings, the car bombs, the suicide attacks, the weapons caches that are found and cleared. And when you look at the fact that we are finding many more weapons caches than we were and when you look at the fact that the attacks are down and the deaths are down, you have to ask, how did this happen? And the way it has happened is our men and women in uniform, and God bless them all, and I think about my constituents from Fort Campbell who are deployed right now, who are in both Iraq and Afghanistan, but the men and women in uniform who are taking the lead and who are gaining the trust of the Iraqi people and of the Iraqi forces and of the Sons of Iraq. And it is our men and women in uniform, as they gain this trust, and as the Iraqis know we're not going to quit, they are telling them, this is what I know, this is where you go to root out this evil person, this is where

you go to root out this weapons cache, this is where you go to get this information. Because they know that we are their partner in success and we are their partner in freedom.

And it really begs the question, and as I visited with some of the veterans that have come to spend some time with us today, this really begs the question, when you look at the data and when you have this discussion, can we afford to give up on a war where we are winning, that our military men and women tell us that they are seeing some successes every single day? Can you afford to give up? And how would history remember it if you did give up?

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. GINGREY. And I thank the gentlewoman from Tennessee for those very intelligent remarks and understanding of what is going on. She has added so much to this hour.

We're getting into the final third of our time. And I'm very pleased that one of my colleagues, a freshman, it's hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, indeed, that he is a freshman because his wisdom is far beyond that. He serves with me on the Armed Services Committee. He will be there tomorrow when General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker testify to us, to the House Armed Services Committee.

At this point, I would be happy to yield to the gentleman from Colorado, Representative DOUG LAMBORN.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentleman from Georgia for his kind introduction and for his leadership in bringing this issue before the American people tonight. I also thank the gentlelady from Tennessee for her intelligent remarks as well.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support and recognize the tremendous efforts of the men, women and leaders of our Armed Forces. The progress made in Iraq is undeniable. The surge is working. And as General Petraeus said today before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the men and women of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces have themselves surged, determined to make Iraq a safe, secure and self-determined nation.

The surge in Iraq is working, but America's job is not complete. We must continue our mission until true freedom and stability are obtained in Iraq. To stop or pull back now would be irresponsible and reckless, risking American and Iraqi lives and the national security of both nations.

Reducing our presence in Iraq at this point would quickly undo the valuable progress that has taken years to achieve. As General Petraeus said before the Senators, it is a fragile situation, and it is easily reversible. To pull back now would communicate to terrorists that America has given up and does not have the stamina or commitment to persevere in the global war on jihadist terror.

The decision on when to reduce the presence of our troops must be based on winning the peace for the people of Iraq, not political whim that overlooks

the successes of our military. But it must not be based on artificial timelines proposed by politicians in Washington as opposed to the considered judgment of the commanders in the field. History will not forgive us if we choose to lose a war we can win.

Precipitous withdrawal now means future generations of Americans and Iraqis will be forced to pay for our giving up victory at a time when we are not only achieving success, but when the people of Iraq themselves are rising up against the influence of terrorists and sectarian ideals in order to create an Iraqi state based on self-determination and freedom.

The right thing to do is to support our service men and women and General Petraeus in their mission in Iraq. I, too, would like to bring our troops home, but not at the price of providing a safe haven for terrorists and allowing terrorists to claim victory.

To quit now would be a disservice to those who have sacrificed in so many ways, but especially to America's sons and daughters who have given so much, and in some cases paid the ultimate price for our security and the freedom of the people in Iraq as well.

So I join with my colleague from Georgia. I, too, look forward to listening to the two gentlemen tomorrow, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, as they describe what has been going on. And I look forward to the opportunity to ask questions and get to the bottom of things that are going on. But I know that I can say what I've just said now with full confidence because I've been watching what's happening in the news and I've been getting the reports up until now, just as my colleague from Georgia has.

I yield back to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. GINGREY. Well, I thank the gentleman from Colorado for being with us. And I hope that if time permits, he can remain with us for some of the additional time. I would be happy to yield to him if you'll just let me know. But, again, he is a member of the House Armed Services Committee, and indeed, he knows of what he speaks.

Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues, the testimony today that went on with the Senate Armed Services Committee was very telling. We are all busy on this side of the Capitol with committee meetings and other responsibilities, so you don't have the time to sit there glued to the television set and watch every single member ask questions of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. But I was able, on occasion, to hear some of the dialogue and the exchange. And I want to share just a little bit of that, Mr. Speaker, with my colleagues at this time. And this poster, this slide that I have, you can reference what I'm talking about.

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, the senior Senator from the great State of South Carolina where I spent most of my youth, I live and represent Georgia proudly now, but Senator GRAHAM, for-

merly a Member of this body, the House of Representatives, and now serving so well in the United States Senate, asked this question of General Petraeus: "Is it fair to say that when Muslims will stand by us and fight against bin Laden, his agents and sympathizers, that we're safer? Is it fair to say that?"

□ 2130

And General Petraeus's response: "Absolutely." It only took one word, my colleagues, "absolutely," we are safer.

And Ambassador Crocker responded this morning in a similar manner, and let me give his quote: "In the little over a year that I have been in Iraq, we have seen a significant degradation of al Qaeda's presence and its abilities. Al Qaeda is our mortal and strategic enemy. So to the extent that al Qaeda's capacities have been lessened in Iraq, and they have been significantly lessened, I do believe that makes America safer." And this is the direct quote from Ambassador Crocker's testimony this morning before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

We will get into now the third point that I said, Mr. Speaker, at the outset of the hour that I wanted to emphasize, and that's the question of is it worth it? Despite the progress that we have talked about tonight that General Petraeus told the Senate this morning, there are those who would ignore that progress and still as they did last September. Maybe it was a more credible argument then. Of course, they were making it before the surge had even gotten there, not really giving it much of a chance. But today to argue for immediate withdrawal and to give up, to snatch defeat literally from the jaws of victory, that's basically what they're saying: It's not worth it. It's not worth it. It's time to quit. And this is what General Petraeus said this morning, another quote, and I share it with my colleagues:

"I do believe it's worth it. I took on the task," and just like General Petraeus he would say this, "the privilege of command of Multi-National Force Iraq because I do believe that it's worth it and I do believe the interests there are of enormous importance, again, to our country, not just the people of Iraq and the people of that region, and the world." That's a quote taken from General Petraeus's testimony this morning.

I am pleased at this time, Mr. Speaker, to yield to another one of my classmates, the gentleman from Iowa, Representative STEVE KING. Representative KING is not only on the Armed Services Committee, but I do believe he's on the Committee on Foreign Affairs. And he is extremely knowledgeable about foreign affairs, about national defense, about so many critical issues. So it's indeed a pleasure to welcome this evening another of my classmates, the distinguished gentleman from Iowa, Representative KING.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Georgia and appreciate your yielding, Mr. GINGREY.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight to join with my colleagues to raise our voices in unison in support of our Commander in Chief and the Commander of the Iraqi forces, General Petraeus, with whom I have had a significantly long working relationship for quite some time, and for all the troops that have fallen in line behind the Commander in Chief and behind General Petraeus all the way out across the board.

I have personally made five trips to Iraq. I've been to Afghanistan. Each time that I go over there, I stop in at Landstuhl. I visit the wounded. I see the price that's being paid. I see the dedication in their eyes. And I believe it's a little stronger in the eyes of those at Landstuhl than it is in those who are standing at attention in Iraq or those that are on duty in Iraq. But all them, all of them, have put their lives on the line. They are all volunteers.

And I think back to a time at a Thanksgiving dinner in Baghdad actually, and the command sergeant major gave me that look that was like I'd like to talk to you off on the side. And I walked over to the side, and he said, I know war is expensive, but we're all volunteers here. We are not just volunteers for this mission. We have volunteered since the beginning of this war, and we all knew that we had a very high likelihood of being deployed here. We want to come here. And I volunteered for this because I want to take this fight from my children and my grandchildren. I want it done in my time. I know war is expensive, but you can't say "no" to us. You cannot pull us out now, not after this sacrifice, not this time. We have got to finish this fight that's before us.

And that's a conversation I will never forget, and I will never forget the look in his eye as he delivered that to me. That's some of the best that we have, our command sergeant majors. And this one fried that into my memory. And I think he has expressed for the fighting men and women over there what they want us all to hear on the floor of Congress and what they want the American people to know. If they're willing to take the risk, if they're willing to provide the sacrifice, how are we to say "no"?

Mr. GINGREY. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, I will yield right back to the gentleman, but I think his point is just so well taken.

This morning, I started the day at 8 o'clock in the morning with a rally in the park on the Senate side, and it was organized by a group called Veterans For Freedom, Vets For Freedom. And 400 of them, 400, were there to give us that very message that Representative KING is talking about, that it is worth it, it is worth it, and to beg us, literally to beg us. And I am sure, my col-

leagues, Mr. Speaker, you will be hearing from them. We will all be hearing from them. I did today. The members from Georgia that are part of the Veterans For Freedom are here, and they're going to make sure that we hear that message loud and clear.

And I yield back to my friend.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Georgia. And I just left a table of marines that are all on multiple tours of duty in Iraq or Afghanistan, and a couple of them were decorated with Purple Hearts and serving in places like Fallujah. And you look them in the eye, and you see what they're asking us to do: Just back us. Just stand behind us. Don't undermine us. Stand behind us.

I take us back to the Vietnam war. I picked up the book written by General Giap, who was credited with what they call their victory for the Vietnamese, for North Vietnam. In that book on page 8, as I recall the page, page 8, there's a little phrase in there where he says they got our first inkling that we could defeat the United States when we saw that they didn't press for a total victory in Korea. A negotiated settlement in Korea gave Vietnam the inspiration to fight the war against us not only on the ground in Vietnam, where they paid multiple prices in lives beyond ours, but to do it in the public airwaves across the country. The protests that went on in the streets here and across in Europe were all part of their war strategy. The liberal media undermining the effort was all part of their war strategy. That doesn't mean they called the shots for the media, but they were complicit in this. And as the will of the American people was broken down by biased information and sometimes misinformation, they understood this: The bottom line in the book Principles of War by von Clausewitz, a summary of his analysis is the object of war is to defeat the will of the enemy.

So the voices that come out from this side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, are the voices of defeat, not the voices of victory. They are undermining the will of the American people. The press is playing into that. We should be standing with our troops.

And I walked down the steps in the Cannon building, and I presume he was a veteran. He reached up and he said, "Support our troops," and shook my hand. And I said, "I will and I will continue to be there." But I missed a beat or I would have said "and their mission" because you can't support the troops without supporting their mission. You can't ask people to go off and put their lives on the line for something you don't believe in.

I believe in this. The Iraqi people believe in this. And today they know something they didn't know a year ago or 4 years ago, two big points that they understand, that's part of their national understanding: One is the Americans and the coalition forces are not there to occupy. We don't want to be there to occupy. We want them to have

their freedom. The second thing is we're not there for the oil, or we would have taken it by now. We want the Iraqi people to live and breathe free.

Yesterday I had a lunch with an individual who was instrumental in bringing Benazir Bhutto to Iowa as she gave a keynote address shortly after September 11. I sat down with her on a couch afterwards one on one, and I asked her, How do we get to the point of victory? How do we defeat al Qaeda and our enemy?

And her answer was, You've got to give them freedom. You've got to give them a chance at democracy. If you do that, they'll change their focus from hatred towards taking care of their families, their communities, their neighborhoods, their jobs, and their mosques.

And I look back on that conversation. Sadly, we have lost her, her voice for freedom, but there is a piece of wisdom in that that the American people need to understand. Iraqi people are now breathing free. They weren't free before. The Afghani people are breathing free. They weren't free there ever. Today there are 50 million people that are free because of the sacrifice of U.S. and coalition troops and because of the inspiration that we provide for the world, and that is a very big thing to hand on to the next generations.

And as we watch the Bush administration move towards that last month in office, and we have many months to go yet, but when it gets to that point, I'm going to say this: I believe history will treat President Bush a lot more kindly than the media has treated him in this time when they write objectively what it means to have the strong leadership in the Commander in Chief, to have an all-volunteer military that's doing a better job than we could have ever asked anybody to do, and they say let us finish our task. The Iraqis say let us finish our task. They're paying their price. We need to hold up our end of this bargain, and we need to support General Petraeus.

And I yield back to the gentleman from Georgia, and I thank him.

Mr. GINGREY. I thank the gentleman from Iowa so much for being with us.

As we rapidly approach the conclusion of this hour, I wanted to make a few other points. The gentleman from Iowa spoke of it when he said we are not there for their oil. We are not there for their land. We're not there for anything except to try to bring a democracy to the Middle East. And you think about the history of this country in other battles that we have been in, in World War I in Belleau Wood, in World War II on the beaches of Normandy, or in the Argonne Forest, in the Korean war, in the rice paddies of Vietnam or the sands of Iwo Jima, whom were we fighting for, and what did we ask for in return? We were fighting for other people as much as we were fighting for ourselves, and the only thing that this country asked for in return was a little

bit of dirt to bury our dead. We don't bury our fallen soldiers anymore on foreign soil, but that's really all we ever asked for.

The 4,000 that we have lost in this battle, how can we possibly turn our back on them? How can we turn our back on the Veterans For Freedom that I talked about that we met this morning?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have sufficient time, and I hope you will allow me to read these 25 names from my district, the 11th of Georgia, who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in this conflict to bring a little bit of democracy to the Middle East. And let me read quickly, Mr. Speaker:

Sergeant Michael Hardegree from Villa Rica; Lance Corporal Samuel Large, Jr., also from Villa Rica; Specialist Joshua Dinger from Hiram, Georgia; Sergeant Paul Saylor from Bremen; Captain Hayes Clayton from Marietta, my home; Private First Class Jesus Fonseca, Marietta; Lance Corporal Stephen Johnson, Marietta; Airman First Class Antoine Holt, Georgia; Sergeant Brian Ardron, Acworth; Private First Class Marquis Whitaker from Columbus; Staff Sergeant John McGee, Columbus; Sergeant First Class David Salie from Columbus; Corporal Tyler Dickens, Columbus.

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Staff Sergeant Rickey Scott, Columbus, Georgia; Corporal John Tanner, Columbus, Georgia; Sergeant Thomas Strickland, Douglasville, Georgia; Spec. Marvin Camposiles, Austell; Spec. Benjamin Bartlett, Jr., Manchester, Georgia; Lance Corporal Juan Lopez, Whitfield; Private John M. Henderson, Jr., from Columbus; First Lieutenant Michael Fasnacht, from Columbus; Lance Corporal Kristopher C. Warren, from Resaca; Specialist Justin Johnson, from Rome, Georgia; First Lieutenant Tyler Brown, president of the student body at Georgia Tech, died in Iraq, from Atlanta, Georgia; Jack Hensley, a civilian contractor from Marietta, Georgia was beheaded by the brutality known as al Qaeda.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my time, again, I thank you for allowing me to read those names.

And my colleagues, I hope that some of those families are listening because I pledge to you we will not turn our back on them. They have paid the ultimate sacrifice. You are continuing to pay the sacrifice, but God bless you for the support of this commander in chief and with your patience and our determination here in Congress, we will give victory a chance, and we will achieve victory.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. ABERCROMBIE (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today and until 11 a.m. on Thursday, April 10.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa (at the request of Mr. HOYER) for today on account of travel delays.

Mr. BUYER (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for today on account of a family illness.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. RICHARDSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. POE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. POE, for 5 minutes, April 14 and 15.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today, April 9 and 10.

Mr. BURGESS, for 5 minutes, April 15.

Mr. TANCREDI, for 5 minutes, today, April 9 and 10.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina, for 5 minutes, April 14 and 15.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas, for 5 minutes, today and April 9.

Mr. CANNON, for 5 minutes, today.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION REFERRED

A Concurrent Resolution of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. Con. Res. 73. Concurrent resolution expressing Congressional support for the goals and ideals of National Health Care Decisions Day; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 45 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 9, 2008, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5866. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Addition of Armenia to the List of Regions Where African Swine Fever Exists [Docket No. APHIS-2007-0142] received March

27, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5867. A letter from the Chief Financial Officer, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Debt Management — received February 29, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5868. A letter from the Administrator, Risk Management Agency, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — Common Crop Insurance Regulations; Cultivated Wild Rice Crop Insurance Provisions (RIN: 0563-AC00) received April 1, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5869. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations [Docket No. FEMA-B-7766] received March 26, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5870. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Changes in Flood Elevation Determinations — received March 26, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5871. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Final Flood Elevation Determinations — received March 26, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5872. A letter from the Counsel for Legislation and Regulations, Department of Housing and Urban Development, transmitting the Department's final rule — HUD Office of Hearings and Appeals; Conforming Changes To Reflect Organization Regulations [Docket No. FR-5185-F-01] (RIN: 2501-AD35) received March 26, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5873. A letter from the Regulatory Specialist Legislative and Regulatory Activities Division, Department of the Treasury, transmitting the Department's final rule — Lending Limits [Docket No. OCC-2008-0005] (RIN: 1557-AD08) received March 26, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5874. A letter from the General Counsel, Corporation for National and Community Service, transmitting the Corporation's final rule — National Service Criminal History Checks (RIN: 3045-AA44) received March 26, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and Labor.

5875. A letter from the Under Secretary Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC): Implementation of Nondiscretionary WIC Certification and Non-discretionary WIC Certification and General Administrative Provisions [FNS-2007-0009] (RIN: 0584-AD73) received March 19, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and Labor.

5876. A letter from the Director, Department of Labor, transmitting the Department's final rule — Asbestos Exposure Limit (RIN: 1219-AB24) received March 26, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Education and Labor.

5877. A letter from the Deputy Assistant Administrator Office of Diversion Control, Department of Justice, transmitting the Department's final rule — Schedules of Controlled Substances: Exempt Anabolic Steroid Products [Docket No. DEA-289F] (RIN: 1117-AB04) received April 1, 2008, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.